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*Chapter for forthcoming Paul Schroeder (ed.) Global Powers: Mann's Anatomy of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Beyond (Cambridge University Press)*

## **Ethnicity, Class and the Social Sources of US Exceptionalism**

*Liliana Riga*

An analysis of the character and consequences of US political development is centrally threaded across Michael Mann's magisterial account of the twentieth century. In fact one of the most compelling arguments of the last two volumes of *The Sources of Social Power* is that enduring exceptionalism cannot consistently explain US political development. Mann shows that through most of the nineteenth century, and especially in the era of intense industrialism between 1872 and 1902, US labour organization was not much behind that of Britain. But then the US began to lag compared to other capitalist democracies of the Progressive Era in terms of labour welfare and other social protections, with comparatively weak socialist or trade union organizations, an absence of labour parties, and exceptional levels of violent labour repression. It was, Mann aptly argues, a labour movement without a working class. By the New Deal years, however, social welfare provisions and a lib-lab welfare regime had generally caught up to make it again unexceptional, and union membership in the 1940s was roughly comparable to that of other industrialized states – before falling behind once again in the post-WWII conservative drift (Mann 2013 Vol. III: ch. 3, 8; Vol. IV: ch. 3).

This account is powerful and persuasive. Mann (2013 Vol. III: 70-74; 1993: 642-644) shows that labour's Progressive or industrial era weakness involved a number of possible factors, concluding that while a certain class organization was indeed present in the 1890s and 1900s, broad class identities eventually 're-tracked' into a combination of localism, sectionalism and factionalism. Region and sector generally outmaneuvered class and prevented lib-lab politics, while in the South race was determinative. So these distinctive racial and regime crystallizations, including an exceptional level of domestic militarism, meant that underlying sectoral, regional, ethnic / racial diversities and localized politics undermined class solidarity, making it hard to mobilize on a class basis (Mann 2013 Vol. III: 70-74, 172; Vol. IV: ch.3).

Taken together, these findings imply a central tension around US exceptionalism. In its formative industrial decades, the US was also characterized by a complex and paradoxical combination of repression and liberalism. On the one hand, it was in comparative terms a democratic and inclusive male democracy with full political citizenship; but on the other, it also had high levels of coercive repression of labour, with workers regularly and often violently outflanked by capitalists supported by the state (Mann 2013 Vol. III: ch.3, 172-173, and *passim*).

This paradox notwithstanding, the US is usually sociologically placed at the liberal end of a wider comparative-historical typology organized around the character of the state. This typology holds that the character and actions of the state – inclusive and liberal, or exclusive and repressive – are central to theorizations or explanations of the comparative character of working classes (e.g. Katznelson and Zolberg 1986; Mann 1993: ch. 18-20). So arrayed along a liberal-repressive continuum, the US and Britain are at the liberal end with the weakest organized working classes, followed by France and Germany, and finally Tsarist Russia – the only truly fully excluded, and therefore fully radicalized, working class. That the character of the state's policies had

a determinative impact on the shape of its working class formations is now settled political corrective to those rather more structural accounts (for example, Lipset 1997) deriving from Sombart's (1906) famous early explanation in *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?*.

But the US's complex combination of liberal democratic inclusion and brutal repression of worker organization arguably sits uneasily on this continuum. Therefore my aims here are two. The first is to begin to think about how to substantively address a somewhat neglected social process in Mann's account of US political development: nation building. And in light of this, a second aim is to offer some additional – albeit preliminary – data on the character of the American industrial labour force. I hope that together these enable further reflection on the US's placement on this continuum, and therefore add to Mann's assessment of what was, and what was not, 'exceptional'.

Beyond race exceptionalism, which Mann rightly and consistently acknowledges as unique, I find that Progressive America's industrial labour was also distinctive among western democracies in its *ethnically* differentiated access to full political citizenship. To be clear, this is not an argument about the collective action problems occasioned by working class ethnic or racial fragmentation – although this might be worthy of reconsideration given an under-theorized causal relationship, which is that industrial labour's considerable cultural diversity itself contributed to political elite unity in these unsettled decades. In fact, the striking consensual nature of the era's nation building or Americanization's content and practices offers compelling evidence that this might indeed have been an important sociological dynamic.

Rather, my argument rests on drawing a different set of implications from labour's cultural diversity, beginning with two empirical claims. First, these years of formative industrialism and first imperial expansion were also ones of nation building or, to put it more precisely, of the disciplining of new and powerful cultural diversity. US nation building – in the form of the Americanization Movement – critically shaped the character of industrial labour, something to which Mann's more class-focused account is perhaps too little attentive. Mann (2013 Vol. III: 204-207) concludes that class conflict was suppressed and nationalism was quite weak. But I find that here the US was actually rather unexceptional: it, too, engaged in homogenizing nation building comparable to other industrializing states (with or without culturally saturated class conflicts). So early imperial extension, industrialism and nation building were empirically related in the US in these formative decades in ways slightly neglected in the last two volumes of *The Sources of Social Power*.

I explore capitalism's cultural embedding in a particularly intensive nation building moment by turning more careful attention to how labour's character, organization and repression might also have been shaped by nation building policies – extensive and often intrusive policies that impinged upon 'alien labour's' political, work and community lives. I anchor this around a second and related empirical reconsideration, which is the extent to which industrial era America was a fully politically inclusive male democracy given, as I show below, that most of its critical industrial labour force was non-citizen and politically excluded from the nation as much as it was excluded or repressed as labour. And indeed it was perhaps the former that enabled the latter. So a better grasp of the cultural disciplining of 'alien labour' might bring into view another dimension of the US's militant repression of its labour force.

More specifically, I hope to extend Mann's account by offering some empirical adjustments to his data on the composition and nature of industrial labour in the decades between the 1880s and the late 1920s. My provisional data is not directed at labour's relationship to capital per se, or to intra-labour factionalism, or to state support of capitalists and industrialists, although it does imply something about each of these. But it does demonstrate, I think, some of the ways in which non-citizen, 'alien labour' sat intersectionally between the industrial era's class conflicts and its cultural, nation-building tensions.

Adding nation building, or the cultural disciplining of 'alien industrial labour', to Mann's rather more class-weighted analysis suggests that the strength of organized labour may have been less a predictor of social citizenship, as *Sources* argues, than it was its indirect consequence. It suggests, too, that to better understand its militarist repression of labour, we might need a clearer political sociological account of the US's comparative placement in the inclusion-exclusion typology. And it suggests that socialism's appeal as an alternative class-organizing ideology might not simply have been related to the liberal-autocratic character of the state, or indeed to its moral disciplinary qualities, but also very integrally to nation building processes and cultural diversity. Put simply, a better understanding of the social sources of American (non)exceptionalism involves greater attention to the political mediation of class conflict with nation building. And finally, all of this hints at a more general reflection on Mann's masterly Volumes III and IV of *The Sources of Social Power*: their relative Weberian silence on the cultural shaping of the contours of twentieth century capitalism.

#### *Americanization: foreign-born labour and the nation*

I begin by contextualizing industrial labour within Americanization's nation building efforts, before offering data on the character of industrial labour. Between 1880 and 1924 more than 30 million Catholic, Jewish and Orthodox immigrants arrived in the US from Southern and Eastern Europe, comprising 15% to 20% of the population and 80% of residents in the urbanizing North-East and Mid-West. They constituted the largest proportion of labour in those industries most central to the US's industrial take-off.

This rapid and significant increase in ethnic diversity generated worries among Progressive reformers about social cohesion and assimilation; it challenged settled conceptions of 'Americanness', which had barely adjusted to the integration of earlier immigrants from northern and western Europe; it threw open legislative and Census debates around how a multiracial democracy might be defined and grasped; it prompted shifts in racialized boundaries of whiteness; and it caused 'the nation' to question whether it now did, in fact, have 'classes'. This latter anxiety was especially pronounced and focused on the urban immigrant working classes because emergent social inequalities were virtually indistinguishable from visible and socially prominent cultural distinctions, beyond those historically settled ones between whites and free blacks.

This dimension of Progressivism gets some attention in Volume III, but Mann's (2013 Vol. III: 65-68) focus is on two strands of the era's social reform: its modernizing control of capital and industry and its redistributive policies. He argues that labour issues were marginal to Progressive programs and that ultimately Progressives failed to redistribute power, something that in turn allowed the cause of labour to lag as capitalists were largely unfettered by the state (Mann: 2013 Vol. III:

69). Despite moves toward egalitarian and progressive taxation (such as the ‘confiscatory tax’ on excessive incomes to curtail wealth’s economic and political power (Piketty 2014: 505-508)), the state’s characteristic reliance on corporate benevolence and ‘private welfare capitalism’, and its failure to enact a range of social provisions, shaped industrial America into a non risk-sharing society.

And yet Progressive reformers were middle-class urbanites and agrarians in a moment marked by comparatively less rancorous labour relations and more prosperity than the Mugwumpery and Populism that had preceded it, and than the post-war reactionary nativism and labour repression that followed (cf. Hofstadter 1955: ch. 4; Link 1969; McGerr 2003). Ideological rhetoric aside, Progressives were as much culturalists as they were ‘redistributionists’. Indeed Progressivism collapsed in the 1920s because intellectuals defected from the cultural project; their central aim had been to de-radicalize the increasingly diverse social forces from below by disciplining them culturally, by re-shaping them in their own class image (cf. Crocker 1992; King 2000; Gerstle 2001; McGerr 2003). So between the 1890s and the late 1920s, they homogenized. They imposed a nation-building, cultural discipline on an ethnically diverse labour force.

This involved one of the largest (and most under-theorized) social and political mobilizations in US history: the Americanization Movement of the early nineteenth century, which marked the effective cultural transformation of its industrial working class from ‘alien’ and racialized non-citizen labour into ‘white ethnic’ citizens. The Americanization Movement was a large-scale grass roots social mobilization for assimilation, a political project involving more than 80,000 federal, state, local and private agencies, including a fully mobilized civil society across more than 30 states, 2,300 cities, 1,200 Chambers of Commerce, more than 800 industrial or trade organizations, 50 national religious organizations, and countless patriotic groupings, churches, shop floors, schools, neighbourhoods, libraries, YMCAs and even funeral parlours.<sup>1</sup> ‘The scale of the movement is difficult to exaggerate’, McClymer (1978: 23) wrote, and as the Chicago Tribune dryly noted on 14 April 1919: ‘only the most agile and determined immigrant, possessed of overmastering devotion to the land of his birth can hope to escape Americanization by at least one of the many processes now being prepared for his special benefit’ (quoted in McClymer 1978: 23).

Only one dimension of this complex and sprawling effort is relevant here: political elite anxieties around the assimilation and ‘naturalization of alien labour’. Indeed, an important dimension of Americanization was almost entirely coextensive with federal and state governments’ relationships to ‘alien labour’. Americanizers in the Bureaus of Education, Labor, Immigration, the Census and that of Naturalization worked to Americanize ‘alien labour’ through the Justice Department and agencies and organizations at every level of state and municipal government, and through all manner of civic association. State-level bureaus developed the most extensive Americanization efforts, and Americanization filled the interstices of Progressive politics’ reach across more than 16,000 cities, counties and localities (cf. Gould 2001; Zeidel 2004; Flanagan 2006). In order to reach ‘alien labour’, they systematically targeted national and local Chambers of Commerce and associations of manufacturers and industries as well as labour unions. These included, for example, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, Bethlehem Steel’s Workers, the Pennsylvania Railroads, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the United Mine Workers. In other words, Americanization targeted *both* capital *and* labour.

In this effort, the Bureau of Naturalization crucially operated as an *institutional section of the Bureau of Labor*. Because citizenship fell under the control of the Department of Labor, in practice this bureaucratically rendered the Americanization problem and the labour problem largely indistinguishable. So the Bureau of Labor Statistics's new 'labour statistics movement', the Congressional Immigration Commission's 42-volume report on 'Immigrants in Industries', countless legislative hearings, and extensive efforts by the Naturalization and Census Bureaus all demonstrated the critical importance given to grasping or making socially legible 'alien labour' (see especially, Carter et al 1991; Cohen 1999; Ngai 1999, 2004; Perlmann 2001; O'Connor 2001: ch. 1; Zeidel 2004). Between 1874 and WWI, more than 130 published reports were undertaken by 29 state labour bureaus and local authorities to gather detailed data on industrial and foreign-born labour, union organizing, citizenship applications and strike rates, working conditions, living standards, family demography, household economies, wages and earnings, and so on (cf. Carter et al 1991). In fact, it was not at the federal level, but at the state level that Progressivism's labour regulations and legislation were most extensive: there were more than 135 distinct state-level labour laws enacted before the 1930s and the New Deal (Fishback et al 2008).

So with the exception of the federally regulated railroads, and health and unemployment insurance, state legislatures actually had great regulatory and legislative control over labour markets because key industries were highly localized. The coal and copper mining industries, for example, were limited to a few states, so despite some variation, both labour regulation and ethnic discrimination were state and industry specific (see, for instance, Hannon 1982; Ziegler-McPherson 2010). This is important for understanding geographic and industry variations in labour repression, union density and organization and anti-strike violence, and, because of their sectoral distribution, for understanding the ways in which foreign-born (non-citizen) labour and black labour were converging around similar levels of political power at the municipal and state levels.

Therefore the concerns of state-level agencies, capitalist and industrial elites on the one hand, and those of Progressive Americanizers on the other, were equally focused on foreign-born 'alien labour'. Industrial elites viewed their economic interests as aligning with those of the nation builders: Americanization reduced accidents and made factory floors run smoothly in a single language; it reduced tensions among workers of different nationalities in a factory; and it eroded internal *padrone* systems of ethnic policing. Similarly, social and industrial relief policies like adult education, labour conditions regulation, environmental protections and conflict resolution were used as key instruments in the cultural assimilation of foreign-born labour, and they were therefore central to Americanization efforts (cf. Flanagan 2006; Ziegler-McPherson 2010).<sup>2</sup> All of this was intended to create a 'more homogenous body of labour'.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, key industrial sectors became sites of both compassionate and coercive assimilatory nation building. And Americanization became part of working class life in neighbourhoods, communities, shop floors and factories. For example, the Ford Motor company's famous 'Sociological Department' built classrooms for the Americanization of more than 1,700 workers (Barrett 1992); the cloth and cotton producing Sicer Company worked with the New York Board of Education in 1913 to allow employees – mostly women because the 'alien man is best reached through the alien woman' – to attend English and civics classes on company time and with a promise of increased wages on successful course completion (McClymer 1978: 40);

the Pennsylvania Railroad's 33,000 foreign-born workers were offered preferments in employment and promotion in 1919 for taking out naturalization papers; a Detroit nut and bolt company did not lay off any foreign-born worker who attended civics night school in pursuit of naturalization papers; twenty-two small industries in Cleveland offered Americanization and naturalization courses on company time; Westinghouse Electric Company organized its own committees of foreign-born labour into citizenship classes; and the Akron Goodrich Tire and Rubber Company employed 27 teachers in their own Americanization school, on the realization that 'the very best place to carry our Americanization work is in the factory' (Hill 1919: 622-638; cf. also Ziegler-McPherson 2010).<sup>4</sup>

In its most coercive dimensions, of course, this cultural disciplining moved slightly away from the nativist-inspired argument that aligned Catholicism with radicalism, toward one in which Jewish, Italian, Polish and Russian workers were (often wrongly) associated with anarchism, socialism and Bolshevism. So Americanization's homogenizing policies urgently targeted male 'alien labour' illiteracy as a national security problem: 18% of the army in 1917 was foreign-born, three million un-naturalized foreign-born males in the war-time labour force were of military age, and 500,000 non-citizen draft-age males could not speak enough English to understand military orders (Hill 1919: 612). The Justice Department similarly defined assimilation negatively and politically, as a way of preventing of espionage and sabotage, which were perceived to derive from foreign labour's 'hyphenated loyalties'.

Critically, then, the deportation of 'alien radicals' required the cooperation of the Department of Labor. 'Alien labour' was deported if workers lost their jobs or became a 'public charge'; and federal intervention in the labour movement was invoked in cases of 'criminality', 'anarchism', political dissidence or so-called wartime misconduct. And labour deportations or forced removals of striking workers by vigilantes, employers and local governments affected hundreds of non-citizen workers (see extensive discussion in Kanstroom 2007: ch. 4). Indeed as John Higham (1955: 220) wrote, 'in deportations the nation grasped its absolute weapon against the foreign born radical'.

In this 'deportations delirium' of the era, citizenship petitions were also regularly denied at naturalization proceedings on evidence that the petitioner-as-worker had participated in strikes (McClymer 1978: 28-29, 35-36). This important practice needs much more detailed research than I can offer here, particularly in terms of whether individuals who were refused papers were then deported, and certainly the actual number of deportations was lower in the pre-1924 period than after passage of the Quota Laws when the term 'illegal aliens' formally entered immigration practices (Ngai 2004: 58-60, 274).<sup>5</sup> But striking workers' citizenship applications were indeed at risk, as Americanization bureaucratically entwined with the need to exclude radicalized labour. This made workers cautious of joining unions, and it made a number of unions equally wary of organizing foreign labour. As importantly, the Department of Labor's Naturalization Service responded with a record number of denials of petitions for naturalization and citizenship, as I show below. Anarchism and socialism, naturalization petitions and industrial challenges were conflated, with the result that political inclusion or citizenship was in complex ways contingent on labour (in)activism. Indeed, it was in this context that the term 'social control' first emerged (Kanstroom 2007: 131).

This political and legal re-inscription of the perceived association of (socialist or class-based) Leftism with cultural difference – that is, the withholding of political

inclusion or citizenship because of labour activism – was followed by more permanent legislation: a culturally disciplining social closure, legislatively achieved in the Quota Acts of the 1920s. Adding to the 1917 literacy test criteria, the Quota Board used national origins to restrict immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe based on assessments of the assimilability of foreign-born white labour. The Congressional Dillingham Commission had recommended the restriction of unskilled labour because of worries of the ‘racial displacement’ of natives by foreign-born labour, but in practice the equivalence of cultural difference with socialism made citizenship eligibility central to this effort.

*Liberalism and repression, citizenship and ‘alien labour’*

So the state’s relationship to foreign-born ‘alien labour’ was at the core of the ways in which nation building intersected with working class formation. In light of this, I hope to anchor this Americanization data with some additional, though provisional, data to illustrate how we might reconsider an important theme in Mann’s Volume III: an account of the US as a male democracy (exclusive of African Americans and women), characterized by political citizenship and full political inclusion, and yet also distinguished by exceptionally high levels of coercive repression of labour.

The depth of labour exclusion is in itself rather important. So we might elaborate its character a bit further than Mann does in Volume III, reaching back in fact to his fantastic Chapter 18 in Volume II, on the comparative analysis of working class movements between 1880 and 1914. I begin by noting that the decades after 1877 in the US were the most violent anti-labour among all western democracies, with at least 1,129 strike-related deaths between the 100 killed in 1877 and the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act (Lipold and Isaac 2009: 189). Here, Mann’s (1993: 635) figure of c.500-800 for workers killed in labour disputes between 1872 and 1914 is at the rather low end, but nevertheless between 1899 and 1905 there were at least 1,000 strikes per year with over 375,000 strikers and 500 deaths between 1894 and 1924.

These figures are not too far off the roughly 150 Lena goldfield workers killed in 1912 Tsarist Russia – usually placed at the other end of the liberal-autocratic spectrum. US strike fatalities were double those of France, and only one British worker was killed after 1911, but more than 5,000 were killed in Russia in these years. So this takes us directly to this repression-liberalism paradox that characterized the US working class. Mann (1993: 644) rightly observes that ‘what is strikingly exceptional or extreme about the United States in this period was its level of industrial violence and paramilitary repression’. And yet the brutality of labour repression is seen as ‘exceptional’, in part because it occurred in what is otherwise characterized as a politically inclusive party democracy:

[i]t seems that employers and regime responded to industrial action in fundamentally different ways. But their level of domestic militarism did not correlate with their position on the representative state crystallization: Russia was the most authoritarian monarchy, but the United States was the most advanced party democracy (Mann 1993: 635).

Now this may be accurate, and there may be no need to alter settled political sociology. But the underlying data is undeniably stark: US repression of organized labour actually lay between that of post-Bismarck Germany and Tsarist Russia –



indeed far closer to that of the latter and nowhere near that of liberal Britain. A sociological account of this level of violent domestic militarism – and all manner of associated legislative, police, paramilitary and judicial repression – requires, I think, a substantive social explanation that treats the US's coercive labour exclusion as *fundamentally integral* to its working class formation, not as exceptional to it.

So I would like to try to recontextualize some of this data in a way that brings a slightly different narrative framework into view. Variations in the institutionalization of class struggles were significantly shaped by variations in state crystallizations, as Mann's work brilliantly demonstrates. But the vast majority of labour in key US industrial sectors (mining, metalworking and transport) was actually increasingly being excluded from even minimal male democracy. The most meaningful daily citizenship privileges had been historically dependent on local state-level inclusions from the beginning of the Republic to the Progressive Era: individual states had had relatively wide latitude in terms of granting the franchise to resident 'aliens', for instance (Smith 1988: 237-238; Raskin 1993). State-level governments had used citizenship privileges like the franchise as a way to attract immigrant settlement (even in the South in the immediate post-Civil War period), so there were few citizenship requirements for the franchise for white males over age 21 in 22 states through most of the nineteenth century.

But between the 1890s and 1927 – or through the course of the Progressive Era – state-level recognition of 'alien' or non-citizen suffrage was removed from resident aliens in every state, leaving them without political representation, and as struggling workers, effectively without what Judith Shklar (1991) famously termed 'citizenship as standing'.<sup>6</sup> Exclusions were first made contingent on Americanization and naturalization, that is, 'declarant aliens' could vote locally on proof of intention to 'naturalize' or take out first papers; political inclusion shifted from 'inhabitants' and 'residents' to 'would be citizens'. But with growing immigration that brought greater 'foreignness' from Southern and Eastern Europe, these local and state level electoral practices were everywhere in retreat. The Progressive Era's Americanization's nation building had fully undone any limited 'alien labour' suffrage.<sup>7</sup>

This nation-building context, I think, crucially contributed to shaping the social valorization of labour vis-à-vis capital. And while the data I can offer here is by no means comprehensive, it might nevertheless build on Mann's work and begin to open a way to a more inclusive social explanation of US labour repression. If the decades of greatest industrial unrest and violent labour repression were also the decades of greatest nation building and cultural anxiety, then for purposes of illustration, we might consider some 'demand side' data to complement Mann's more 'supply side' data, and allow an otherwise obscured dimension of this liberal-repressive contradiction to come into view. Drawing on data from mid-level federal bureaucracies such as that of Naturalization and Immigration services within the Bureau of Labor; Congressional studies on state and regional industrial labour conditions; and local studies contained in state-level labour bureau surveys, where most anti-labour violence was sanctioned, I offer the following cumulative data points, roughly approximating the formative decades of the industrial labour movement.

First, while native-born labour was largely rural, foreign-born (and second generation) labour comprised nearly 85% of the urban working classes in the Northeast and Midwest – particularly consequential industrial regions and the intellectual homes of Progressivism. Of the total first-generation foreign-born population in the US, 61.3% worked in four key sectors of the new industrial

economy (manufacturing, mining, construction and transportation/railroads) as compared to 39.9% of the native-born working population (Carter et al., 2006: 621-622, Table As874-937). This was not simply immigrant or ethnic labour; it was *foreign-born* labour, and its dominance in key industries gave it a disproportionate relevance in the triadic state-capital-labour relationship. It also placed the cultural disciplining of the foreign born at the centre of the social control of the heavy war industries – and this made the US rather exceptional vis-à-vis other states, where labour in comparable key industries was actually more ethnically homogenous, even in multiethnic Tsarist Russia depending on region.

Beyond the ethnic diversity of US industrialism in these formative decades, a second and more layered data point is offered in **Table 1**. If we also add Census statistics on the working classes' *naturalization rates* and *citizenship status*, which are often oddly neglected in accounts of labour and immigration in this period, in 1890 one-third of all foreign-born males over age 21 were 'un-naturalized', *non-citizens* (defined as having no papers or only first papers),<sup>8</sup> and no citizenship status was known for a further 9%. This increased to 48% in 1920: nearly one-half of the white US male labour force over age 21 was 'alien', citizenship-less labour, with a further 5% of unknown status (Carter et al., 2006: 598, Table Ad280-318). At the crucial state level, where most direct labour repression was sanctioned and practiced, and where the franchise and citizenship privileges were everywhere contracting even for 'declarant resident aliens' and depending on the state, between one-fourth and one-half of all eligible labour was non-citizen. This challenges something of the idea that this was a working class characterized by liberal political inclusion or full male democracy, or even by 'citizenship as standing'.

Interestingly, *trends* on naturalization data or citizenship rates show a steady increase from 1907 (when data was first systematically collected) to a peak in 1919, followed by a brief period of stabilization and then slow decline from the end of the War through the 1924 Immigration Act. Then the numbers rise again during the New Deal and WWII years. The peak years of successful naturalization were 1918 and 1919, when respectively 42% and 59% of 'naturalized aliens' were made citizens under military provisions (all figures, Carter et al., 2006: 641, Table Ad1030-1037). The majority of petitions for naturalization in 1919 – only available to free white persons – came largely from Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Not surprisingly, these were also some of the states with the most intensive and coercive Americanization efforts because of the ways in which industrialism and assimilation efforts so closely entwined.

**TABLE 1: FOREIGN-BORN MALES AND CITIZENSHIP**

	foreign-born males over 21	Of which were naturalized citizens	non-citizens (no papers or only first papers)	citizenship status unknown
<b>1890</b>	4,348,459	59% (2,545,753)	33% (1,425,513)	9% (377,193)
<b>1900</b>	5,010,286	57% (2,848,807)	28% (1,426,490)	15% (734,989)
<b>1910</b>	6,780,214	49% (3,038,303)	44% (2,961,947)	12% (779,964)
<b>1920</b>	7,063,594	44% (3,320,226)	48% (3,379,292)	5% (364,076)

<b>1930</b>	7,218,977	59% (4,247,704)	38% (2,740,170)	3% (231,103)
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**Source:** Data extracted from Carter et al., *Historical Statistics of the United States* Vol.1, Part A Population, Table Ad280-318, p. 1-598.

Equally suggestive is the trend in the proportion of petitions for citizenship *denied*: in 1910, 20% of ‘alien’ naturalization petitions were denied, this decreased to 14% in 1916, but during a crucial moment of military mobilization in 1918-1919, and in line with military naturalizations, only 0.05% to 0.08% of petitions for citizenship were rejected. Non-citizens were eligible for military service, of course, something that helped their subsequent petitions for citizenship.

This important military carve-out in a context of exclusion from other democratic processes suggests, of course, that wartime exigencies outran other concerns. So as the war ended, and following the large coal, steel and railway strikes, in 1922-1923 rejection rates returned to pre-war levels (17%). By then, however, the practice of denying papers to striking ‘aliens’ had been generally institutionalized and routine – and understood as such by political elites, industrialists, unions and workers alike. Once foreign-labour migration was closed to new immigrants with the Quota Acts, and as the cultural coercion of the Americanization movement took hold and steadied nation building anxieties, rejection rates again returned to their 0.05% historic lows between 1927 and 1930 (all figures, Carter et al., 2006: 641, Table Ad1030-1037).

I make only two brief observations. First, in addition to concerns about low rates of naturalization petitions among the eligible male (working) population, a very worrisome category for officials between 1900 and 1910 was that of ‘no known citizenship status’, because this meant that 12% to 15% of the foreign-born population remained ‘illegible’ or ‘unknowable’, and therefore potentially threatening. And second, legislators and mid-level federal bureaucrats also worried about trends: while the proportion of new-immigrant foreign-labour increased until its closure in 1924, the proportion of those seeking citizenship or taking out first papers steadily decreased relative to numbers. Indeed, as both premise and conclusion, the Dillingham Commission’s report asserted with alarm and urgency that among the crucial iron and steel manufacturing industries in 1911, ‘the tendency toward acquiring citizenship among the foreign-born male employees...was very small, only 32% being naturalized and 11.4% having taken out first papers’ (Dillingham et al. 1911: Part 23, Vol. II p. 18).

**Table 2** disaggregates the data further, focusing more precisely on those sectors most crucial to the industrial moment. These are where the most violent labour repression occurred. Most immediately, foreign-born labour was disproportionately sectorally and geographically concentrated in industrial manufacturing. This impacted wages and inequalities (Restifo et al., 2013), but it also suggests how we might begin to re-contextualize anti-labour hostility and repressive labour practices. Industrialism generally and the war industries in particular were highly dependent on first generation immigrant or foreign-born labour, which comprised nearly 62% of workers over age 21 in coal mining, 50% of those over age 21 in railroad and construction industries, between 52% and nearly 68% in hard coal, oil refining, iron ore and copper mining, and nearly 58% of those over age 21 in iron and steel.

In key industrial sectors, even higher proportions were *non-citizen ‘alien labour’*: nearly 57% of the iron and steel industry, 60%-73% of the extractive sector (soft and hard coal, oil, copper and iron ore), and depending on region and location,

on average 64% of transport and railroad labour was non-citizen. Drawn from Dillingham et al. (1911), these figures correspond roughly to the 1907-1911 years, but both foreign-born and non-citizen labour proportions increased from these levels in the 1914-1919 period – something that requires more systematic data than I can offer here.

**TABLE 2: NON-CITIZEN LABOUR IN KEY INDUSTRIES\***

	% of foreign born in sampling of industry (2 <sup>nd</sup> generation)	% non-citizens or only first papers of eligible males older than 21 at time of immigration & in US more than 5 years in sampling of industry	% of foreign-born who were affiliated with trade union based on sampling of industry (% of native-born)
<b>Iron and steel</b>	57.7% (13.4%)	56.6%	1.5% (3.6%)
<b>Clothing/textile manufacturing</b>	59% (25%)	69.9%	n.a. n.a.
wool/worsted manufacture	61.9% (24.4%)	63.9%	4.1% (21.9%)
silk goods (textile)	34.3% (44.9%)	38.7%	3.1% (18.2%)
cotton goods	68.7% (21.8%)	70.2%	n.a. (11.3%)
clothing manufacturers	72.2% (22.4%)	70.1%	18.4% (3.6%)
boots/shoes	27.3% (25.6%)	66.9%	37.1% (35.3%)
<b>Extractive/mining: **</b>			
bituminous (soft) coal	61.9% (9.5%)	73.3%	31.8% (55.8%)
anthracite (hard) coal	59.4% (38.7%)	71.6%	77.5% (25.8%)
oil refining	67.7% (21.5%)	63.7%	1.2% (5.8%)
copper mining/smeltering	57% (12%)	59.5%	0% 0%
iron ore mining	52.6% (4.3%)	62.1%	1.2% (6.9%)
<b>Construction/railroads***</b>	50% (21%)	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Diversified Industries: Representative Communities****</b>			
Community A	63% (14%)	64.4%	8.3% (13.7%)
Community B	59% (19%)	50.5%	23.2% (29.3%)
Community C	85% (4%)	68.2%	2.8% (3.1%)
Community D	86% (7%)	79.9%	7% (14.1%)
Community E	73% (10%)	57%	27.1% (15.7%)
Community F	88% (5%)	62.1%	3.8% (13.3%)

\* Each column is based on slightly different industry populations, so baseline numbers for percentages vary.

\*\*Excludes agriculture and fishing

\*\*\*Includes tool manufacture; electric railway transport, supplies and manufacture; locomotive building; steam railway transport; zinc smelting/manufacture; foundry and machine shop products manufacture; other related industries.

\*\*\*\* Case studies of households in representative industrial communities.

Source: Data extracted *United State Immigration Commission (1907-1910)* (1911) (Washington DC: GPO), Vol. 24 "Immigrants in Industries", Part 23: Summary Report on Immigrants in Manufacturing and Mining; Vol.18 "Immigrants in Industries": Part 21, pp. 95, 117, 156, 198, 260, 292, 331, 360, 395, 420, 480, Diversified Industries; Vol. 16 "Immigrants in Industries", Part 17, pp. 11, 41-2, 70 (Copper mining/smeltering), Part 18, pp. 205, 209, 248, 277, 279 (Iron Ore Mining), Part 19, pp. 587, 620, 639, 641, 699 (Anthracite coal mining), Part 20, pp. 745, 766, 835, 853, 863 (Oil refining); Vol. 9, Immigrants in Industries, Part 2 Iron and steel manufacturing; Vol. 6 "Immigrants in Industries", Part 1 (bituminous coal mining).

State and federal-level labour repression had remarkably similar patterns of geographical or sectoral concentration. We know that 46.5% of US strike fatalities occurred in the extractive sector (with coal mining accounting for one-third of these) and in the transport and railroad sector. Indeed, more than 80% of strike fatalities were in these two industrial sectors, while only 1.4% of strike deaths occurred in construction or the building trades (Lipold and Isaac 2009: 189, 196-199). Because of its sectoral distribution, industrial violence also had geographical patterns: it was worse in the mining and industrial states (e.g. Pennsylvania, Colorado, West Virginia, Illinois, Ohio, New York) and in the south, where ‘southern exceptionalism’ is sometimes noted given the historically distinctive ways in which southern political elites aligned with capitalists, but also, and as importantly, given the lesser valorization of black labour (Lipold and Isaac 2009: 201).

Of course, labour unrest in the extractive and transport sectors anyway posed a greater threat given these sectors’ centrality to industrialism and its war efforts, making its repression rather more predictable; and mining anyway tends to generate unions and more cohesive working class communities, as well as greater repression. And I stress this needs much more granular empirical data at the intersection of ‘alien suffrage’ and (‘alien’) labour repression. But it is the case that those industries that had the highest proportion of foreign-born labour also had among the highest levels of local and state-level repression. And at moments and locations of peak labour repression, a numerically substantial and politically consequential proportion of the US working class was increasingly restricted in its access to political citizenship.

Moreover, and again based on non-exhaustive data (Table 2), citizenship status across industries also had an intimate and complex, though non-linear, relationship to trade union density. Sectoral, regional and ethnic compositional variations mattered of course; and historically the most organized were native-born workers. The attractiveness and openness of trade unions for foreign-born ‘alien labour’ was variable, and affected by local conditions of employment, the relative proportions of ethnicities employed in different localities, and workers’ disruptive capacities, including the availability of (usually foreign-born) replacement workers. In the Midwest, Southwest and West organized labour controlled the labour supply and unionization among foreign-born were generally higher; but Pennsylvania had the largest proportion of new foreign-labour (Italian, Lithuanian, Russian) in unionized localities, and in the 1900-1902 coal strikes its localized, extractive-industry concentration raised worker replacement costs and therefore boosted union density (Dillingham et al. 1911: Vol. 6: 100-104; Kimeldorf 2013).

An additional dynamic was also in play. Trade union membership of non-citizen labour tended to increase initially with greater length of residency across industries, but then it stabilized: in the coal industry of Pennsylvania, for instance, trade union membership was 20.6% for those in the US less than five years, and 38.3% for those resident between five and nine years, but it then remained steady at 38.7% for those resident more than ten years (Dillingham et al. 1911: Vol. 6: 104). Similarly assimilation, if measured strictly by citizenship rates, was higher in the Southwest, where their numbers were smaller and unionization rates were high: 68.1% of foreign-born labour in the Southwest had papers, in the Midwest as a whole it was 39.6%, but only 12.3% in Pennsylvania, and 10.8% for the minority of foreign-born in the South. In the form of full citizenship, then, Americanization did not necessarily lead to greater unionization, though the relationship between ‘alien labour’ unionization rates is worthy of greater consideration.

Moreover, the strength or presence of national unions did not seem to make a difference in terms of the extensiveness of liberal protective labour legislation: between roughly 1899 and 1919, the ten states with the greatest amount of labour regulation and state labour spending per worker were largely in the West (North Dakota, Idaho, South Dakota, Nevada, Montana, New Mexico, Arizona, West Virginia, Minnesota, and Colorado), while the bottom ten were in the South and parts of the Mid-Atlantic (South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Virginia, North Carolina, Texas, New York) (Fishback et al 2008). These patterns are suggestive not only of the important role of larger manufacturing employers and their ability to influence state legislatures, but also of the possible role played by the relative size and homogeneity or heterogeneity of labour's composition. Taken with the data above, there was greater protective legislation where labour was more rural and homogenous with political citizenship, and worse where it was largely black or foreign-born, urban non-citizen. My suggestion is simply that these cultural contexts contributed to both the social (de)valorization of labour and to the shaping of capital-labour-state relationships.

This is not evidence of ethnic diversity fractionalizing or sectionalizing what would otherwise be a more fully articulated working class, a process that was, as Mann rightly notes, only part of the story. But this kind of data is significant in terms of what it implies about the tension between democracy and repression – and to where we might comparatively place the US. If between one-half and two-thirds of its labour force in key industries at a moment of peak labour repression were non-naturalized 'aliens' whose earlier state-level citizenship rights was being curtailed, then this was not really a labour force characterized by full male democracy or liberalism in the most meaningful sense. Foreign-born, non-citizen labour – much like black labour – found itself at the intersection of the class conflicts generated by industrialization and the cultural conflicts generated by nation building processes. And this meant that *political exclusion* materially and consequentially characterized a critical segment of the US working class.

### *What's exceptional and what's not?*

So I offer a few tentative reflections to perhaps Mann's analysis. Most generally, my preliminary findings suggest that the underlying cultural de-valorization of labour in this nation building moment may need a more prominent role in our accounts of both labour formation and of its violent repression in the decades of greatest industrialism. This provisional data also carries more specific implications. First, it is perhaps *easier to repress* 'alien' non-citizen labour than citizen workers, or those democratically included workers armed with the vote and political voice. This is most especially true at state and local levels given 'alien labours' even more limited ability to compete with the legislative power of industrialists and organized capitalism in state legislatures and local politics. But it was precisely in these political locations where (i) anti-labour violence, (ii) protective labour laws and (iii) contractions of historical citizenship practices originated. These relationships clearly need more granular empirical research.

Their combined effect reinforced 'alien labours' exclusion, and it arguably had a conservative role on labour organizing, not least because workers knew that they risked citizenship. Indeed, the lessons workers generally draw from capital's alignment with political, police and judicial power and from intimidation and violence can hinder willingness to organize (Goldstein 2010: 276). Of course this fear may

have been mitigated in certain contexts: in the Southwest, where all labour was in collective bargaining arrangements, or in some of the extractive industries (agriculture, fishing and mining), where geographic isolation raised worker replacement costs, or where non-citizen labour was locally a dominant majority with hard-to-replace skills (cf. Kimeldorf 2013). But the climate of serious repression and fear of permanent political exclusion no doubt had its effects. So we cannot substantively explain US working class formation in these decades and the capital-state-labour relationship without taking a fuller measure of its cultural shaping, and of the ways in which an enormous segment of its labour force experienced nation building practices.

In this regard, sometimes Mann (2013 Vol. III: 278-279, 282) notes that ‘the strengthening of nation eases class conflict, part of the dialectic between class and nation’. But I think that nation building might perhaps need to be more causally central to a historical sociological account of the formation of the US industrial working class in the decades *before* the New Deal. In the American case, Mann argues that class struggle enabled the extension of nation, that nation was rendered more cohesive because of class struggle. And yet some of the data offered above on ‘alien labour’ suggests that actually the causal relationship in this period may have run the other way: the prior expansion of nation is what subsequently allowed labour in.

The Progressive era’s nation building and cultural disciplining of ‘alien labour’ culminated in a legislative social closure around foreign-born labour with the Quota Acts and the 1924 Immigration Act. Immigration legislation was quintessential nation building (Ngai 1999; Zolberg 2006). But it was also critical labour policy: by removing urban manufacturing competition from ‘native labour’ for forty years, in effect by decreasing unskilled foreign-labour from a high of 13%-15% in 1920 to 5% by 1965, the Quota Acts decisively shaped the skills composition of the labour force and the contours of organized labour for decades. This social closure around white foreign labour created a temporary repose in cultural and nation building anxieties – perhaps a permissive condition for both subsequent New Deal inclusion *and* for allowing attention to class inequalities. Indeed Mann (2013 Vol. III: 257-259) notes that by the mid-1930s striking workers had national sympathies, as nation and class solidified and ethnicity weakened with more workers born in the US.

So if the Progressive Era created the white ethnic out of ‘alien labour’ for inclusion in nationhood, the New Deal embedded them as recipients of its welfare and housing policies, with race not an exception to social inclusion and citizenship but its permissive condition. Fox (2012) nicely shows how white immigrants, African Americans and Mexicans constituted three different ‘faces of dependency’ in the early New Deal. Setting aside the conspicuous omission of Asian immigrants (dealt with in Ngai 2004), for white immigrant labour this was actually a re-inscribing of the earlier broad set of relief policies aimed at cultural disciplining in Progressive era industrialism.

To put this differently, prior attention to homogeneity can allow attention to both social inequalities and to the inclusion of the working class. Nation building was as causally important to the expansion of social citizenship as was the strength of labour organization. As Edwin Amenta’s work has convincingly shown, greater democracy or political voice along certain political process dimensions better enables redistributive social policies. But in this moment at least, this was itself premised on a prior or contextual cultural inclusion in the nation: redistributive policies are easier when there is a cultural consensus with few identity fractures, so a real or imagined



sense of nation building homogeneity may have enabled *both* labour's subsequent (if brief) inclusion *and* supply side redistributive attention to inequalities. In those historical moments when the US looked more like Europe in terms of social citizenship (i.e. became more risk-sharing), it also viewed itself as more culturally cohesive.

Understood in this way, we can better grasp a persistent and 'exceptional' feature of US labour development, which runs through much of the twentieth century: the social equivalence of Leftism with cultural difference. Industrial capitalism was dependent on an 'alien labour' that was politically excluded from meaningful democratic processes and 'citizenship as standing', but remained the target of an intensive cultural disciplining. It also opens the way to a better sociological theorization of the extensiveness of labour's violent and brutal repression in these industrializing decades, beyond caveating this to domestic militarist exceptionalism. Instead, we might begin to better situate US anti-labour violence and the ways in which the composition and character of industrial labour was socially valorized, challenging the extent to which we continue to characterize the US as a fully inclusive male democracy in terms of its early working class formation, and the social sources of its exceptionalism.

As arguably the most critical segment of the US's second industrial takeoff, 'alien labour' sat intersectionally amid an intense industrialism and a culturally disciplining nationalism. In this respect, actually, it was rather unexceptional. As a nation building or culturally disciplining project, Americanization was more liberal and less state-led than those that made 'peasants into Frenchmen', or that Magyarized, or Polonized, or Russified their populations. Indeed, comparatively situating Americanization in this way needs more research. But as a general reflection, these were the same industries at the centre of the revolutionary Central Black Earth region of the Russian working classes in roughly the same years, and in Russia they were similarly among the most viciously repressed between the 1880s and 1917, although they were ethnically also more homogenous. Moreover, the US pattern of political inclusion or exclusion of migrant segments of the working classes was more similar to Germany's trade union exclusion of Polish labour than it was to France's inclusion of Italian migrants.

Besides nationalism, of course, given my tentative account here, Mann's (1993) wonderful political sociology, which holds that socialism occurs when production also fuses with political exploitations, would imply a stronger socialism for the US, not a weaker one. But this typological construction might itself be a little too narrow. Socialism as an elite political ideology for organizing labour often tends to be more appealing in contexts where nation building process are more fractured or less developed, in the way that nationalism and socialism-as-universalism can compete intensely in contexts of deep cultural diversity. So there may perhaps be room for a more textured analysis of the ways in which the strength or weakness of socialism – both at the level of organized working classes but also as an appealing elite ideology – is related not only to the liberal or autocratic character of the state per se, as Mann's sociology tells us, but also to underlying cultural exclusions or inclusions and nation building processes. In other words, we might comparatively reflect a little more on the ways in which capitalism and socialism might both be in some measure shaped by the politics of underlying cultural diversities, and the US should not be exceptional to this theorizing.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I draw here variously on materials from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, MD, and Washington, DC Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; Records of the Committee on Public Information; Records of the Council of National Defense/Records of the Educational Propaganda Department; General Records of the Department of Labor; Records of the Office of Education; Records of the US Commission on Industrial Relations; the University of Chicago Archives and Library Robert Ezra Park, William I. Thomas, Sophonisba P. Breckinridge and Americanization Collections.

<sup>2</sup> 'Washington America First Campaign to Increase School Attendance of non-English Speaking Immigrants: How Chambers of Commerce Can Cooperate', Circular 9, n.d., Department of Interior, Bureau of Education, Division of Immigrant Education, NARA.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> 'Americanization' (newsletter), No. 3, Vol. 2, Washington DC, 1 November 1919, pp. 13, 15, Department of Interior, Bureau of Education, Americanization Division.

<sup>5</sup> Between 1901-1910, 119,769 'alien radicals' were deported; the figure rose to 206,021 between 1911-1920, and 281,464 in the subsequent decade. Figures in Ngai 2004: 274.

<sup>6</sup> Shklar's (1991) 'citizenship as standing' broadly includes not only voting but also the opportunity to earn (the good life, union organizing etc.) and a public recognition of respect and social belonging, all as distinctively American marks of US citizenship.

<sup>7</sup> There remained a certain bifurcated citizenship, then: 'alien labour' was taxed and drafted as citizens, but had no effective voice in the political process.

<sup>8</sup> First papers refer to the 'declaration of intention' to become a citizen. Usually taken up two years after arrival, they could be held for years.